

COUNCIL HOUSING BREATHES AGAIN

Scottish campaigners are heralding a victory as the first new council housing in nearly 30 years enters its first phase of development following a bitter fight over stock transfer

As the housing market continues to tighten and private builders bail out of the sector, the demolition of Broomview house in Sighthill, Edinburgh, has taken place, with the city council taking out new loans to fund a regeneration of the site itself.

The site was originally slated to be turned over to private developers, with control held by an Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO), but despite financial pressure from the government this was roundly defeated by a major tenants' campaign in 2005, forcing a rethink. Labour has been accused of effectively blackmailing council tenants into accepting stock transfer by offering substantial grants to areas which accept it, while denying them to those that don't.

Nick Durie of Praxis in Scotland has been heavily involved in the tenant's movement

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LENS CAP INQUEST OPENS



On 22nd September 2008, the inquest into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes is due to finally take place, more than three years on. "Jean Charles de Menezes was shot dead on 22nd July 2005 at Stockwell tube station by Metropolitan Police officers after they wrongly identified him as a terror suspect. Despite two official IPCC investigations and a guilty jury verdict at the Health and Safety trial at the Old Bailey no officer has ever been held to account for their actions. The inquest will be the first opportunity the Menezes family have had to ask their questions and confront the police officers involved in the operation in a public court."

IWW ASSEMBLY IN LONDON

In a first for the syndicalist IWW union, its annual General Assembly has been hosted in Britain.

Held over the 30th and 31st of August in East London's Toynbee Hall, a historic venue of the labour movement, syndicalists from the US, France, Germany, Poland and America were present at what the UK IWW is claiming is a significant step forward for their union.

After a successful national conference in Leicester, during which the union chose to implement new measures to put the growing organisation to work on a variety of issues, wobbly members in the UK took on the task of hosting the first international congress of the IWW ever to be held outside of North America in its 103-year history.

Speaking to *Freedom*, BIROC Secretary Adam Lincoln said, "The fact that the IWW hosted its international congress in the UK underlines the important role the European comrades are playing within our union. I think the fact that the General Assembly was held here shows that the union is becoming more international. I think that can only be a good thing for the class struggle in the UK."

The votes, which were a mix of proxy forms, ballots, and simple shows of hands, were all passed by large majorities, and the event culminated in a barbecue behind Freedom Press in a makeshift venue built by the union's London branch. All decisions will now be put to the full membership by postal ballot.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

DEFENCE: Two families who lost sons in the RAF Nimrod that burst into flames over Afghanistan two years ago, killing all 14 people on board, have begun a legal suit against the Ministry of Defence. Their case focuses on alleged MoD negligence in failing to ensure that the Nimrod was safe to fly. The aircraft blew up during mid-air refuelling when fuel leaking through a corroded coupling in pipework ignited after coming into contact with a hot-air pipe.

EDUCATION: Union leaders are urging Gordon Brown to put 'trade unionism' on the National Curriculum alongside compulsory subjects such as English and maths. The 250,000-strong Communication Workers' Union also wants State funding for union officials to visit schools and teach about the right to strike.

EMPLOYMENT: Six million workers (24% or one in four of the UK workforce) are not satisfied with their job – and almost one in three (30%) do not feel engaged by their employer, according to a new report from the TUC. The commonest problem that faces people at work is increased workload, with 11 million workers (46%) complaining of this. This is followed by "pay not keeping up with the cost of living" (42%).

ENVIRONMENT: A new planning application for the building of a development in Worthing, West Sussex, has been attacked by campaigners for retaining plans for an access road which would cut through the heart of Titnore woods.

Campaigners noted: "A wood is no longer a viable bio-system with a road cutting it in half. Wildlife like dormice and crested newts will not survive in what will be no more than roadside clumps of trees surrounded by tarmac and executive homes. Needless to say, the battle against the destruction of our countryside in West Durrington goes on! We are urging everyone to send in their letters of objection to planning application WB/04/00040/OUT as soon as possible – 9th October is the very latest deadline."

EQUALITY: A trade union was not justified in indirectly discriminating against a number of female members in resolving gender-based pay inequalities among local authority employees, it has been found.

The Court of Appeal said that the GMB union was wrong when it signed a national collective agreement with local authorities in 1997 to bring in a single status pay grade without securing compensation for some of the women affected.

The women claimed that the union's prioritisation of pay protection and future pay over compensation for past inequalities was discriminatory. The employment tribunal found the union had failed to give the claimants a fully informed choice, and manipulated them into accepting the deal by threatening job losses

LENS CAP ROSSPORT



Gardaí confront Shell to Sea demonstrators near the Shell construction site at Rosspoint. The Shell to Sea flotilla took to the waves in Broadhaven Bay in an attempt to foil winching preparations in advance of the pipe-laying ship the Solitaire's arrival. The flotilla were opposed in their mission by Shell's fleet of security mercenaries, Gardaí, and the Irish Naval service, which were deployed in overwhelming numbers and in an unsafe manner, say protestors. Seven Shell to Sea marine protestors were arrested and taken to Belmullet Garda station. In a simultaneous action at the gates of the Shell Glengad compound a local man was arrested and taken to Belmullet Garda station. An earlier marine sortie had successfully held up shore-based dredging operations in the Glengad compound this afternoon for about two hours; there were no arrests that time.

Turnout rises for Earth First!

Volunteers at the radical green gathering Earth First! have met costs for the first time in several years after an influx of new people from August's Climate Camp.

Around 250–300 people attended the annual event, which brings together green movement activists from across the country, from 27th August to 1st September. Unlike the Climate Camp, which aims to be an open site for anyone interested in green issues, Earth First! aims at activists, offering training in practical skills such as climbing,

knots, and counter-surveillance, along with planning actions.

Talking to *Freedom*, one volunteer said: "It's less techie because not so large, it's much more about catching up on campaigns and actions where climate camp is more about demonstrating sustainable living. This like the regional networking workshops were really useful. We got a lot of people in from the Climate Camp because it was quite heavily pushed there, and unlike last year it took place afterwards."

"One issue that seems to be building up though is that Climate Camp is sucking in a lot of people and money. Next year Earth First! is going to be planned around it. It seems like a lot of activists are organising it which is draining them from other campaigns."

The debate over the merits of Climate Camp as a draw for activists compared to the resources required to maintain it came out in snippets throughout the gathering, say volunteers.

"It's hard to say how many people will turn into activists, it may take a few years, but there needs to be a clear framework to get new people into the movement and it shouldn't take too many people away from campaigns."

The Earth First! winter moot is due to be held later this year.

earthfirst.org.uk

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Photograph: Rob Ray

THREAT: The fortified entrance gate to Dale Farm. Irish travellers living at the site are living under threat of eviction.

Fears over traveller children

Supporters of Dale Farm, the embattled home of the largest Irish traveller community in the UK, say they have uncovered a secret plan by the council to seize over a hundred children from the site and take them into temporary care. Traveller activist and journalist Grattan Puxon alleges that a whistle-blower has revealed the plot to take the children by force under the auspices of a judge's safety order.

According to details obtained by Ustiben, Essex County Council welfare officers would enter Dale Farm village in a fleet of coaches and mini-buses, accompanied by bailiffs and police, some in riot gear. The media would then be told the removal of infants and youngsters – among them some 70 primary-school children, along with the elderly and vulnerable – was for their own safety. They would be

detained at a holding centre some miles from Dale Farm.

Grattan Puxon said: "Officials anticipate that within hours frantic parents will call to demand their children back. According to instructions, they are to be released providing families agree immediately to leave the county under police escort. Heavy vehicles, including JCBs, earth-movers and lowloaders will be employed for at least a week razing the village. Its five tarmacked streets, lined by fenced and walled yards, comprise 132 chalets, mobile-homes and caravans, as well as the new Saint Christopher's community centre and chapel.

"Similar has happened in the West Midlands before, it was used as an excuse to get people away."

Basildon District Council has set aside five

million euro to bulldoze Dale Farm and drive over a thousand Gypsies and Travellers from the area. It has already demolished a dozen Gypsy properties at nearby Hovefields.

The Gypsy Council met in the centre on 9th September to discuss the threat. It has asked for and obtained a confrontation with top Essex officials at County Hall, Chelmsford, expected to take place later in the week.

Gypsy Council president Richard Sheridan, chair of the Dale Farm Housing Association, views the county council plan as an abuse of welfare legislation. "This is county council collusion with Basildon's policy of ethnic-cleansing," commented Sheridan, who is attending the Roma Summit in Brussels later this month. "They want to crush our homes and take away our children."

Council housing breathes again

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and the campaign against stock transfer. He said: "At the moment the council is funding it directly. The campaign for council housing in Scotland though is pushing for these debts to be written off and we want parity for the councils which have voted no to stock transfer. We want money released to build houses directly."

It is believed that the space may be there to push for such measures, as the government's policy remains in disarray after a legal tussle with the EU which could undermine their plans to put social housing in the hand of ALMOs

"One of the things which has been exposed by all this has been the stock transfer agenda, which has been put on the

backburner. The government is in a wrangle with the EU as to whether 'arm's length' management organisations count as public or private sector bodies. The EU are saying they are public sector, which would mean that the government's strategy contravenes European policy. While the argument continues, stock transfer has slowed down" Nick explained.

"At the same time Balfour Beattie and the other big construction companies are saying that they need financial help and there's thousands of jobs being lost in construction, amidst a continuing housing shortage, which has created space for more council housing to be put on the agenda.

"It's good to see what's going on with the

councils but the government has got to start stumping up the money itself."

Other options have also been put forward, with some campaigners pointing toward the success of the Radical Routes housing organisation in helping to build a network of housing co-ops which are owned and run by their tenants.

The group notes: "With fully mutual par value co-operatives [everyone owns an equal value share in the venture, usually a nominal £1] the ownership of houses and land cannot be divided among individual members. The property remains in common ownership from generation to generation and if the cooperative is dissolved its assets cannot be pocketed by individuals."

PUBLIC SECTOR

Born poor, die younger

Class is as relevant today as it as ever was as a recent report from the United Nations (UN) graphically shows. The report, called *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*, shows that if you are poor your life expectancy will be significantly less than if you are rich.

Life expectancy for the poorest in Britain has fallen to 79 trailing behind Japan, Canada, Italy and Sweden and the report firmly places the blame on what it describes as a 'toxic' combination of government policies. The poor have shorter lives than the rich because they suffer poor housing, poor education, low income, lack of access to transport, inadequate access to public services and poor diet. "Social injustice is killing on a grand scale" the UN says. In response English Health minister Alan Johnson had to admit that the gap in life expectancy between the rich in poor has widened in Britain but claimed that (despite ten years of failing to do anything about this) Labour would reduce the gap 10% by 2010.

The UN report highlights stark disparities within the UK, as in most countries in the world. A boy in the suburb of Calton, Glasgow, can expect to live 28 years less than one brought up in Lenzie, a few miles away. One born in Hampstead, London, will live around 11 years longer than a boy from St Pancras, five stops down the underground Northern line.

The UN pulls few punches. Deprivation reduces dramatically children's chances of growing up to lead healthy lives, the report says. Health inequity "is caused by the unequal distribution of income, goods and services and of the consequent chance of leading a flourishing life". It is not a natural phenomenon, but "the result of policies that prize the interests of some over those of others



– all too often a rich and powerful minority over the interests of a disempowered majority".

As anarchists have long pointed out the state acts in the interest of those who have rather than the majority of us who have little. Under Labour social mobility has declined – if you are born poor you and your children are now even more likely to stay poor than before Labour got into power.

Inequality starts even before children are

born. The think tank The Fabian Society in their 2006 Commission on Life Chances and Child Poverty pointed out that babies born to families with low incomes are significantly more likely to be under weight (below 2500 grams) than a baby born to a better off family and while infant mortality rates have improved the rate of improvement is less for babies in poor families.

Richard Griffin

Budget cuts for training nurses

An NHS pressure group has warned that controversial cuts to nurse training budgets could lead to a shortage of frontline staff in London, even as the NHS announces a huge budget surplus for the year.

Health Emergency say there is a growing crisis in staffing for intensive care, paediatrics, theatres and coronary care. There have also been reports of a shortage of paramedics as across the sector £165 million has been stripped from training budgets.

Yet the Department of Health, which has been attempting to make all hospitals run within financial parameters which would make them suitable for shifting into the private sector, has now announced a predicted surplus for the year of £1.75 billion – more than ten times the level of training cuts for frontline personnel.

The new finance figures have been published in the first quarterly report of

2008/09, which looks at the NHS financial performance in April-June of this year. The figures forecast the year-end financial position based on the first three months of the financial year. The surplus is predicted to be around 2% of the overall NHS budget.

Geoff Martin, Health Emergency Head of Campaigns, said: "Siphoning funds from the NHS training budgets just at the time when there is growing evidence of a serious shortage of specialist staff in key areas is scandalous mismanagement which will have severe long term consequences for patient care.

"There's no point the Government bragging that the NHS has declared a massive surplus when a big chunk of that cash in the bank has been ripped off from funds that should have been used to train up the staff that we will need in the future. This is boom and bust economics of the very worst kind."

More council strikes possible in Scotland

Scotland faces more council strikes after local government employers refused to increase a 2.5% pay offer. Union members had hoped local council body Cosla would offer a new one-year deal taking inflation into account. However, Cosla said increasing the pay offer in the current economic climate would result in service and job cuts. Meanwhile, hundreds of other civil and public servants voted for strike action which could cause serious disruption to the justice system. Following a meeting with union officials, Cosla spokesman councillor Michael Cook said the pay offer for local government workers would remain at 2.5%. He said: "The problem for us is that while we do sympathise with our workforce and the monetary pressures they are facing, we have a major difficulty because we are facing exactly the same pressures on budgets across the board. We have two roles and we have to strike a balance between that of an employer and that of a service deliverer." from Libcom.org

IN BRIEF

ENTERTAINMENT: On 21st August Chris Lockwood, union organiser and member of the Industrial Workers of the World union, was fired from his bar job at the Showroom Cinema in Sheffield (UK). The news follows a long campaign by management of allegedly picking off and isolating workers who have voiced objections to recent changes. The Showroom Cinema has consistently attacked workers' pay and conditions with the sole aim of greater profits, say the union.

The IWW have called for support, email sheffield@iww.org.uk for more information.

EDUCATION: Thousands of staff at the DVLA in Swansea have taken part in a UK-wide one-day strike over pay. The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) said there was a 16% pay gap compared to other Department for Transport (DfT) workers.

HOUSING: Buy-to-let repossession have significantly increased compared to this time last year. Adam Sampson, chief executive of Shelter, said: "These figures show the shadow of repossession is no longer just cast over homeowners, but also thousands of innocent renters who have no idea how close they are to eviction."

HOUSING: Homeowners who remortgage are being double charged by financial groups, as borrowing is charged interest by both the old and new lender on the day of the transaction – even though it's instantaneous.

Although the individual amounts taken average around £30 a time, this equates to around £30 million a year across the country.

PENSIONS: While most are losing out on their final salary pensions, top bank executives have avoided the impact of both the pensions crisis and the credit crunch to retain top-grade salaries. Despite a catalogue of errors and destructive policies, executives' pots are now worth an average of £3 million.

RETAIL: Marks & Spencer has suspended the worker who blew the whistle on its proposals to cut redundancy terms for more than 60,000 staff. Maria Ludkin, head of legal affairs for the GMB, accused M&S of over-reacting. "They're acting as though he's responsible for stealing the Colonel's secret recipe." M&S is cutting redundancy pay by up to 25% ahead of rumoured job cuts from 70 weeks to 52.

TRAVEL: The Stop Bristol Airport Expansion campaign has found that the South West Regional Development Agency, having spent over £22m on local airport projects, admitted in a recent internal meeting that such funding may not be useful to the local economy after all and that "there remained a concern about the assumptions underlying the forecasts. It was widely agreed that passenger air duties and fuel price rises would inevitably have an impact on growth forecasts."

Asbestos cover-up

An investigation into the Asbestos industry has exposed a decades-long conspiracy in the industry to continue exposing people to the highly dangerous substance despite full knowledge of the risks.

The investigation found that the then-mighty Lancashire manufacturing giant Turner & Newall (T&N) exposed millions to the carcinogen – even though they had discovered its dangers as early as 1898 and linked the first asbestos-related cancer in 1930, saying in 1961 that the only safe level of asbestos in the factory was no asbestos.

They piled pressure on the government to turn a blind eye despite the evidence, and were rewarded with a compliant state throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and a ban was only introduced throughout the EU in 1999 after years of complaints from the government that it would "cost British jobs".

Even today, the fight is continuing for the

corporate descendants of T&N, as they look to use the courts to doge the responsibility of paying for those still-living victims of asbestos poisoning.

Lawyers for the insurers now theoretically liable for damages are arguing that unless asbestosis was diagnosed while the victims were still at work, there should be no liability. There is also the government's helpful rescinding of an order for businesses to keep 40 years of records as part of the 'bonfire of red tape' – both of which could leave large numbers of victims whose symptoms may not manifest for decades out in the cold.

Asbestos kills 4,000 people in the UK every year, the vast majority of them from the areas in which it was originally manufactured, such as the Spodden Valley in Rochdale (a site which has recently seen a battle by residents to stop a housing development from being built on it).



Anthophyllite asbestos fibres

Sierra Leone exploitation plan

As opportunities for new investment dry up in the UK marketplace, British Private Equity groups are looking to aggressively expand into war-ravaged Sierra Leone – the poorest country in the world according to the Human Development Index.

Private Equity in the UK has come under repeated fire for its tactics in taking over major companies then cutting jobs and assets before selling them on to the market.

Until recently in the grip of a major civil war in which blood diamonds bought by the west had financed the death of hundreds of thousands of people, Sierra Leone's government has recently declared itself 'open for business', inviting foreign investors to bring in as much

money as they can spend on extracting the country's vast mineral wealth.

However the state remains listed as one of the most corrupt on the continent, with one of the least free presses – something which has not put off plans by the West to invest heavily in its industries and agriculture.

Sierra Leone has potentially high-yield agricultural land and no minimum wage or labour laws – and because in most cases land is not registered in the name of the business running it, financing is otherwise hard to come by.

Critics say that some British investors in Sierra Leone are interested only in exploiting the weak legal system.

INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BRAZIL: 9,000 workers striking at car plants in the south of the country have voted to extend their strike. Workers began their strike in support of demands for wage increases to deal with rising inflation. Three Volkswagen, Nissan, and Renault owned plants in the southern state of Parana have been affected.

Greater Curitiba Metalworkers' Union, representing the workers in Parana, is demanding a wage increase of 13%, as well as a one-time bonus of 1,500 reais (£435).

CHINA: A Danish-owned electronics factory in China has been accused of flouting labour laws after continuing with the sacking of trade unionists after a court order was won forbidding them to do so.

Ole Wolff Electronics refuses to recognise a workplace union formed by the employees after conditions at the plant failed to improve to a minimum standard, and continued to refuse to grant its workers formal contracts – as required by law.

GREECE: Greek anarchists have stormed a supermarket and handed out food for free in the latest of a wave of raids provoked by soaring consumer prices. About 20 unarmed people, mostly wearing black hoods, carried out the midday robbery in the northern city of Thessaloniki, police said. Local media have labelled the raiders 'Robin Hoods' following previous raids. They take only packets of pasta, rice and cartons of milk which they drop in the middle of the street for people to collect, a police official said. "They have never stolen money or hurt anyone."

GUYANA: Workers striking for higher pay shut Guyana's sugar industry for a second full day on 27th August. About 13,000 workers crippled Guyana's sugar industry last year demanding a 12% pay raise to cope with inflation.

MEXICO: If the Mexican government has not addressed the demands of indigenous women in the southern state of Oaxaca by the end of the first week of September, 10,000 native women will travel to the capital to directly pressure President Felipe Calderón.

Among the demands set forth are the construction of a women's hospital in a rural area, medical posts throughout the region and the creation of an air ambulance service. They are also calling for the construction of a bridge in a village that has been cut off for 12 years, a housing programme using local materials, and policies that would guarantee women's social and political rights.

NEW ZEALAND: Protests were held around the world on 30th August for the global day of action to 'Drop the Charges' against the 20 people arrested in the nationwide State Terror Raids of 15th October 2007. The deposition hearing (i.e. the pre-trial) starts in the Auckland District Court on Monday 1st September 2008.

LENS CAP BLACK SEPTEMBER



Ten years ago in Chile on 11th September Claudia López, an anarchist woman, student and dancer, was assassinated by police while she was on a barricade protesting in a commemoration of the coup d'état of 1973. Under the slogan of Black September, young people in Chile confront the police in her name and all those assassinated under democracy. On 1st September a number of young people set up barricades outside the Universidad de Chile college and fought riot police with molotov cocktails and stones, confronting police that used guns and tear gas.

Mahalla riot trials resume

People arrested as part of the crackdown on the Mahalla riots in Egypt have been brought to special emergency courts which have seen international condemnation for their unfair practices.

Amnesty International have raised concerns that Egyptian authorities are trying to avoid a fair trial so they can make an example out of the 49 people they are currently holding.

On 5th April, the government successfully stopped a general strike called in support of industrial action by textile workers in the city of Mahalla north of Cairo. The next day, police clashed with Mahalla workers.

Over 200 people were spirited away by the state during the fighting, which started in response to violent police attacks on peaceful demonstrators, and there have been widespread

reports of torture in the prisons since then of people considered ringleaders.

Despite a general strike which followed the arrests, the government has continued to crack down on the population, arresting both left wing and muslim pressure groups as President Mubarak shores up his power base.

The 49 defendants are being tried for a wide range of charges, including: assembly of more than five people with the aim of disturbing public order and security; deliberate destruction of public and private property; ransacking and theft; violent resistance and assault on police officers during the exercise of their duties; and illegal possession of firearms. If convicted they face up to 15 years' imprisonment.

Notes from the United States

The Democratic National Convention took place in Denver from 25th to 28th August.

As expected, many protesters in the 'mile high city', Denver, were arrested merely for being there and for peacefully expressing outside the heavily fortified convention building complex views that were different from those held inside. Indeed, Cindy Sheehan, peace activist celebrated by the soft left for her camp two summers ago outside Bush's Crawford TX ranch seems to have been put under surveillance while at the convention. In an email to her supporters she describes returning to her hotel room to

find someone 'working' on her phone with a screwdriver.

The livelier, largely women's peace group with many anarchist members, Code Pink, was also singled out: a Denver police officer was videotaped assaulting a Code Pink member at a protest on the Tuesday. Alicia Forrest, 24, was hit with his baton and forced to the ground. As she tried to relay her experience to reporters nearby, she was grabbed and arrested by police.

The Republican equivalent in the Twin Cities (St Paul-Minneapolis) from 1st to 4th

INTERNATIONAL

Victory against Peru oil landgrab

The Peruvian government have temporarily backed down in their attempts to get indigenous Amazonian tribes off land wanted by oil and gas giants after massive protests.

Initially a state of emergency was declared after the passing of a piece of legislation by the executive last month prompted thousands of tribespeople armed with spears, bows and arrows to seize main roads, a hydroelectric dam and oil and gas facilities across the provinces of Cusco, Loreto and Amazonas.

Between 9th and 20th August, the protestors held both the facilities and a number of police hostage, demanding that their voting rights be respected, and only called off the action after president of Congress Luis Velásquez Quesquén promised the decrees would be dropped.

On 20th August, the National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining (CONACAMI) had also launched a permanent vigil outside the Constitutional Tribunal, Peru's high court in support of the tribespeople's demands.

While the government was able to re-establish control over some of the facilities, including the hydroelectric dam, the strength of resistance seems to have taken them by surprise. Re-taking the installations resulted in clashes between thousands of indigenous protesters and the army in Bagua.

The tribespeople's action appears to have won a major victory after decrees 1015 and 1073 were stripped from the legislation and replaced by decree 2440 following a parliamentary vote – 66 for, 29 against.

The two earlier decrees by Socialist International member party ARPA had changed the nature of voting over the future of what is currently communal indigenous land, from requiring a 2/3 majority for sale under ILO



Photo: manistong

FIGHTBACK: Protestors in Peru

convention 169, to a simple majority vote.

Indigenous leaders warned that the minimum demand of overturning the decrees would not secure communal territories, as land invaders and employees of resource companies who have been on the lands in question for over a year can be considered comuneros under the law – with a binding vote on the fate of the territories.

ARPA chiefs had used special powers assumed as part of a free trade agreement negotiated with the United States to change the law to modify the convention by degrees, something which legislators say breaks constitutional rules.

Indigenous movement spokesperson Alberto Pizango celebrated the decision, declaring, "The people of Peru, indigenous or not, have

demonstrated once more that it is possible to reclaim our rights to life, to dignity, and to a lasting sustainable development. This is a new dawn for the Indigenous Peoples of the country."

The spokesman for the ruling party legislators, Aurelio Pastor, said the government would veto Friday's parliamentary vote.

"By doing that, the only thing the government is going to achieve is to generate ill feeling in the country. It is just provoking the indigenous people; that's called state terrorism," Congressman Víctor Mayorga, who headed the working group that originally assessed the constitutionality of the decrees, said.

However, Mayorga explained to IPS that the legislature can overrule the government's veto.

Notes from the Unites States

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September. Arrests began in St Paul even before the weekend. In a new turn apparently involving multi-agency aggression and infiltration, arrests, raids, brutality and violence were rife in the name of preventing opposition of any kind from surfacing. 'Pre-crimes' were sought out and acted upon.

Cheri Honkala of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign described the behaviour of the police: "[W]e set up encampments ... for some place for people to sleep. The first night we were surrounded by 200 police officers in riot gear. They turned on the sprinklers on our children while they were sleeping, turned off all the park lights and drove their police vehicles up onto the lawn with their [l]ights on.

"And myself and a couple of our other leaders were then arrested, and our [camp] was torn down. Later through the week, they brought dogs ... while the kids were sleeping."

Then, armed gangs of police in the Twin Cities raided several locations in a series of 'pre-emptive raids' detaining both activists and journalists and videographers working to document police actions.

Groups directly affected by the raids include Food Not Bombs, I-Witness Video, Communities United Against Police Brutality and the anarchist/anti-authoritarian RNC Welcoming Committee.

Then on the Monday, which was Labor Day (1st September), more high profile attacks and arrests took place. A number of prominent reporters, producers and newspeople were violently assaulted by police. Most of the arrests happened shortly after a peace march with ten thousand supporters which was organised by the Coalition to March on the RNC and Stop the War.

Louis Further

Walmart replace pay with coupons

Retail giant and Asda owner Wal-Mart has been caught attempting to replace cash payments to workers in Mexico with card usable only in Wal-Mart stores.

Mexico's Supreme Court ruled Friday that Wal-Mart de México violated the Constitution.

Wal-Mart de México, also known as Walmex and is a unit of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., gives employees electronic store cards as part of their salaries. The court said the practice harked back to exploitative wage schemes of a century ago.

For now, the ruling applies only to the worker who brought the lawsuit and will not require Walmex to stop giving store cards to other employees. But if enough other workers decide to bring a similar case to court, the ruling could guarantee similar decisions in the future, a court spokesman said.

Wal-Mart announced rising profits last month, with shoppers switching over as part of the credit crunch.

FEATURE

North of the border: a look at a

Rob Ray interviews Declan of the Alba Anarchist Federation and Nick Durie of Praxis Glasgow

Rob Ray: Scotland has had a strong tradition of class struggle. Are there many links between today's younger and older radicals?

Declan: Most of the anarchists of the inter-war years and just after, people from the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation and the Workers Open Forum, etc., are gone now. The last living link to the activism of Guy Aldred, etc., was John Taylor Caldwell, who passed away last year. There are certainly libertarians who have been active since the 1960s and are still doing it today!

Scotland seems to be reasonably active. Are there any groups who aren't perhaps so well publicised?

Declan: I'd like to say yes, there are groups everywhere, but unfortunately that wouldn't be true. However, there are some green shoots emerging, notably in Stirling, Dundee, St Andrews and Dumfries. There are comrades, isolated but trying to build something in difficult conditions, all over Scotland. There's room for optimism.

Following devolution ... where do you think ... Scotland has changed, if at all since?

Declan: There are more jobs for the boys and

girls in various quangos! To be honest, there's no 'national renaissance' underway, though I think there's a small growth in everyday optimism amongst a certain layer of the population. Life is pretty much exactly the same for workers up here as before the SNP victory.

In recent times ... the Scottish left has tended to be larger and better organised than in England. What sort of levels of engagement do you tend to find for radical politics?

Declan: There's a bit of a myth that there's a considerably larger audience for revolutionary class politics in Scotland than in England. It's based upon the fact that the SSP managed to bring together a majority of the left for a period of time and had a group of MSPs, something the left have never been able to do down south. That was obliterated following the split with Tommy Sheridan and the 2007 elections. Today, the SSP is reorganising, Solidarity still unites the SWP, Committee for a Workers International and the Tommy S fan club. Both parties have a diminished presence outwith Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and a few other places.

Putting down roots in working class communities and workplaces is as much hard work up here as in England or Wales, unfortunately.

Nick: Overall levels of consciousness do seem to be higher in say Glasgow than they are in Birmingham, but that doesn't necessarily mean better organisation. What there is is primarily Leninist and electoral. We do have a real opportunity now that the Leninist left

is in disarray to rebuild in the trade union branches and in communities – things like the tenant's movement, which has stabilised and won important gains.

Was having that larger broad left group good or bad for anarchists?

Declan: At the end of the day, anarchists and libertarian communists need to organise themselves, regardless of what the left are doing at any given time. The SSP presents itself as different to the traditional Trotskyist left, more pluralistic, libertarian even. But, despite the rhetoric, they defend a social democratic/left nationalist and statist politics at odds with a genuine libertarian and internationalist perspective.

What is the relative strength of the unions in Scotland, and where are the more militant holdouts, if any?

Declan: In terms of union density, Scotland is higher than England and Wales – but that doesn't translate into more militancy. The level of combativity isn't notably higher than elsewhere; though we have had the recent one-day strike over pay in local government. The involvement of the rank and file was distinctly low. The RMT up here was affiliated to the SSP, but after the split is now unaffiliated. They recently absorbed the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee, an independent union that was a product of militant struggles in the oilfields in the '80s. There's also a National Shop Stewards Network in Scotland, which is fairly new but reflects the SSP schism.

Nick: There hasn't been much of a grass roots focus for a long time and there has been a tendency to have middle-aged unionists who are a bit jaded from a decades-long losing streak. If there is a difference with things like strikes it's that we have the energy sector, where the unions are relatively strong, and manufacturing. One of the things which has been particularly problematic is unemployment – which approaches 50% in Glasgow in places. There are a lot of people who aren't in trade unions simply because they aren't in work. There's a few rumbles from the consierges in Glasgow, parking attendants, cemetery staff ... all of that could kick off, but there's a poor level of organisation – even if our membership levels are a bit higher.

One of the big success stories was the Crichton Campus campaign ... how have the IWW fared since then and how prominent are anarchist ideas in the branches? Where is it most organised?

Declan: The IWW in Scotland is numerically strong and there are local Branches in Edinburgh, Clydeside and Dumfries, whilst there are groups in Aberdeen, Stirling and St Andrews. The Clydeside branch is the biggest and there's a workplace branch at the University



REMEMBERING: Mayday in Glasgow last year

photo: weishu1619

anarchism in Scotland



photo: ianmac3

ANTI WAR: Anarchists get involved in an anti-war demo in May of this year.

of Glasgow. The Edinburgh branch is undertaking a lot of Migrant worker solidarity and outreach, particularly amongst the Polish community. This is bringing in a lot of people and is very exciting. There's also a Scottish IWW Education Workers organising committee which is taking off at the moment.

It's hard to say how 'prominent' anarchist ideas are in the IWW up here. The union doesn't promote partisan politics, so there are plenty of socialists and people who don't have a label in the union. Certainly, much of the left sees the IWW as a little anarchist-only union. Maybe it's the red and black union flags ... it's not true!

Do other anarchist federations have much of a presence?

Declan: Well, there's a small Solidarity Federation (anarcho-syndicalist) presence in Edinburgh and some members of Liberty and Solidarity (the new platformist group). The Anarchist Federation has new groups in Glasgow and Stirling and individual members in most parts. The AF has had a presence in Scotland since the early 1990s and in the early 2000s we had a Glasgow group which produced a bulletin called *Ar-a-mach* (Scottish Gaelic for Uprising). We are planning an Educational Dayschool and a new bulletin. At the moment we are meeting nationally, distributing *Resistance* and AF literature and are involved in the IWW, Glasgow Anarchists, Praxis and the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh.

Nick: There hasn't been historically a unified organisation, mostly things have been organised around loose affinity groups and campaigns. It's positive that there's been some growth from the AF but we're still very marginal and sidelined by the larger social democrat groups. The official launch for Praxis (a platformist group) is in the middle of September, which is based in Glasgow and Edinburgh with about a dozen members, and we're planning to recruit heavily. We're close to Liberty and Solidarity in England with individuals being very involved, but decided to remain separate.

How about community politics etc.?...is there much support for Platformism?

Declan: We think involvement in community campaigns can bring results that show that direct action gets the goods and that politics aren't something separate from people's everyday lives. AF members from Praxis have been particularly involved in this.

Is there more support for Platformism in Scotland than England? I think class struggle based anarchism is certainly strong up here. Historically, the anarchist movements in places like Fife and Glasgow were working class movements, not sub-cultural. I think anarchists up here are generally pro-organisation, they see the need for consistent activity. The AF attempts to offer a theoretical and organisational framework and general continuity to activity and has attracted people already active in Scottish libertarian politics.

There's a lot of activity up here in the area of asylum seeker and migrant worker solidarity, the direct action anti-militarists and the Edinburgh Chiapas Solidarity work has been a long-term campaign with a high profile. The Glasgow Anarchists are bringing anarchist politics into the streets, making anarchist ideas available. If the anarchist movement wants to be accessible, it needs to be visible – I think that's a basic!

I think these are times of great potential in Scotland, for libertarian politics, for anarchist organisation and working class self-organisation. But, we've a long way to go.

Nick: For the first time there seems to be a hegemony of class struggle anarchist ideas within Scottish anarchism. But some of the stuff which is being done is useful class building stuff and some of it is still pretty incidental. The anarchist movement is marginal, we have a lot to do.

Contacts

- AF Alba: info@afed.org.uk or flag.blackened.net/af/alba
- Glasgow Anarchists: Glasgow_anarchists@riseup.net
- IWW Scotland: iwwscotland@gmail.com, or phone 07910 627 970
- Praxis: praxis.glasgow@gmail.com or praxisglasgow.wordpress.com
- SF Scotland: edinburghsf@solfed.org.uk, or phone 07896 621313

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

Alongside the usual comings and goings at Angel Alley, we were happy to host the evening get-together of the IWW's post-General Assembly. The event, partially organised by one of *Freedom*'s own editors (who sadly will be leaving us over the autumn to complete his studies, so good luck with those mate) was a relaxed barbecue in the intimate setting of the newly revamped courtyard in front of the Freedom Press building. It was fantastic seeing wobblers and observers getting together from across the world, even if the politics have seemed to be a bit messy recently, and generally rubbing along well.

Meanwhile plans to bring the bookshop downstairs to the old stockroom – a large ground floor space with actual shop windows – proceed apace, with piles and piles of books being taken on by comrades from other groups. It's good to know they're getting a good home, people are more than welcome to enquire because they will simply be thrown out otherwise.

As usual, we are looking for people to help out at the paper, the shop and indeed with the big revamp, so if you want to get involved, contact Andy, Mo or Scott at the shop or email shop@freedompress.org.uk.

Rob Ray

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Above your name on the address label is a number indicating when your subscription runs out. To work it out, this issue is volume 69, number 16, so if you've got 6916 above your name your sub runs out with this issue, so if it's 6916 or earlier please renew now. See page 16 for the renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in future, ask us to send you a standing order form either by email at freedomcopy@aol.com or subs@freedompress.org.uk, or write to 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 27th September 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 18th September. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

One of the most memorable moments in film, to my mind at least, is the scene in the *Life of Brian* where Reg, leader of the People's Front of Judea, explains their differences with the Judean Popular Front, Judean People's Front and the Popular Front of Judea. The latter is just one person and the others are all referred to as splitters. It's a recognised satire on the left, where tiny groups spend more time attacking each other, for some more than they spend attacking their stated enemies in the government.

The term sectarianism originated with organised religion, where, I suppose if you believe you have the only sure-fire route into heaven, you are going to be combative in your differences with your rivals. Applied to a political setting, sectarianism finds its highest expression in the various flavours of Leninism. This is unsurprising, given the parallels with religion: a set of sacred texts handed down by a prophet and his followers and a certainty that salvation can only be achieved through the leadership of the sect.

However, sectarianism isn't just having differences with others – it is prioritising these differences over any other shared interests or positions. A true sectarian from an anarchist-communist point of view is someone who puts their group's interest above that of the working class as a whole. While I think this is common amongst much of the left, it is far less common with anarchists, though not unknown.

Despite a war of words between groups at times, the instinct of most anarchists is to work together on issues where practical. This is how it should be – unlike most from the Marxist tradition we don't think any one group has all the answers. In fact, plurality of

ideas and expression is integral to anarchism – it's one of the reasons we reject permanent leadership. Just because someone is right once, it doesn't mean they'll be right about everything else.

What isn't sectarian, however, is following through the logic of your politics. Having a number of anarchist organisations with different politics and ideas is actually a healthier situation than having just one. Any unity between diverse organisations has to come from them working together and agreeing positions. Disagreement is healthy, not sectarian. What becomes sectarian is to allow differences to prevent groups working together. For example, the differences between the Solidarity Federation and the Anarchist Federation over joining unions would preclude working together on that issue, but wouldn't stop them working together in supporting workers in struggle or fighting against the war.

One comrade in Solidarity Federation related to me how he was described as sectarian because he wasn't a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. This is just silly – the logic of anarcho-syndicalism is that politics is not separated from the workplace. The practice of the IWW is to keep politics out of the workplace and the union – it even has policies that are explicitly hostile towards anarchists, pejoratively identified as 'anti-political sects'. The accusation is further undermined by the actions of Solidarity Federation locals in supporting IWW campaigns in recent years. While I can see how anarchists can do good work in the IWW, the choices of other anarchists who see things differently should be debated on a political level, not just on the level of name calling.

Blog Bites

(from jackray.co.uk)

I was reading a message board discussion the other day where a video game developer castigated those involved in piracy. They were, according to him, thieves, destroying the industry. The replies that came back were pretty feeble, a mixture of equivocation and pleas of personal circumstances. What perhaps they were lacking was a real moral/ethical argument to give their retorts a bit more scaffolding.

'Cause if you believe that intellectual property is right and just then no amount of personal justification will get you past the idea that the thing you have taken belongs to someone else and you have not paid for it.

Of course, there's a material justification, though you have not paid for your illicitly acquired gains you haven't deprived the original owner of anything. Your copying of their work has not removed it from their possession, it has merely added it to your own. What you have taken from them is a potential sale.

But that's not enough on its own. Ultimately if the product of your mind is your personal property then taking it without permission is theft.

On the other hand, I'm systematically opposed to capitalism. As far as I'm concerned every element of the productive process is about them appropriating our labour. I don't really believe that the owning class should exist, so I don't think their claim to property is legitimate. Intellectual property in particular I find has a pretty flimsy justification.

On the theoretical side the basis is pretty weak, for me. The idea is that thoughts, like things, are commodities, that they can and should be copyrighted, owned and monopolised. Except the vast majority of them aren't. Everything from pub chatter to recipes is held in common. You don't expect your friends to pay up if they repeat your jokes to someone else.

A recommendation

For readers who agree with the endorsement by Martin Gilbert of Christian anarchy in his thoughtful 'Looking at the path to anarchism through a more spiritual lens' (*Freedom*, 19th July 2008), I strongly recommend *Building a better world* by Dave Andrews (1996, Albatross Books), which is available absurdly cheaply (see usedbooksearch.co.uk). When, a few years ago, I read his later *Christi-anarchy* (2001, Lion Publishing), it didn't impress me. But it has impressed other people. So perhaps I didn't give it a fair chance.

John Desmond

Bucking the system

Communities

Anarchism has never been established as a going concern. It has existed for short periods under extreme political conditions such as during the Spanish Civil War and in Britain in small communities during the Second World War. Such communities start when most needed but they usually only survive for a few years. They are similar to small unstructured apolitical associations. Those who organise these would be horrified at being thought of as anarchists. Those groups that survive become larger, centralised and hierarchical. Ultimately they are absorbed into society.

The system

Most anarchists have a nagging feeling that anarchism is unattainable because capitalism cannot be replaced. Maggie's Law states that 'the system cannot be bucked'. What is galling for anarchists is that capitalism and anarchism are, as philosophies, almost indistinguishable. Both argue that getting rid of government would make little difference

Blog bites

◀ page 10

More than that, almost all ideas are built on a framework of things that people discovered that are held in common. Newton never copyrighted gravity. Tim Berners-Lee never got paid to invent the World Wide Web. Doesn't mean that Blizzard pay him shit out of those millions of subscribers to World of Warcraft.

What though of the hard-working people that make all this stuff, don't they deserve to get paid? Well, ultimately they aren't the ones who own the thing that you're stealing. That's the preserve of them people that own intellectual property (the capitalist class!). They procure that right from exploiting the labour of the creative workforce, setting up elaborate contracts to ensure that the people who make these things are not the one's that own it. Just like regular capitalists, they own the finished product and pay back their workforce a fraction of what they produce.

since society is self regulating. It runs itself. In common with socialists, capitalists say that over time political control will become unnecessary: it will wither and die.

Capitalists and anarchists both believe in a self determining society, Maggie's system, which is based on intellect. Again, in common with many philosophies they believe we can behave as we like: we have free will and there are no restrictions as to what we can do and the way we do it. They believe freedom is in our minds. It is cerebral and gives people the ability to organise through thought. They believe education is a means for manipulating behaviour for the good of society.

Control

There is then little real difference between capitalism and anarchism. The only practical difference is in how to control society. For capitalists this is through government, and they are up front about it. They believe in democratic control: voting as a means for safe guarding self interest. In practice democracy is somewhat different and anarchists attempt to expose this. It is easy to carp.

Anarchists are evasive about how society would be controlled under anarchism because they don't have a clue. They appear to believe it is by self imposed rule: personal responsibility. When pushed they cannot say quite what that is. It appears to involve individuals who determine their futures while showing reverence for others. Capitalist believe in all that: the responsibility of the citizen. When people stray the law, like insurance, is supposedly there for them.

Capitalists and anarchists believe obedience to society is by consent. Capitalists in return for this offer protection. We have a 'pay to play' society. Anarchists see the capitalist citizen as acquiescing to exploitation. However, anarchists have nothing to offer instead except the illusion of nirvana. The capitalist trick is to get people to believe they have choice and the ability to determine their futures: that they have free will. This is environmental determinism: you get what you deserve. Anarchists in accepting choice go along with the capitalists. To change society, lock up the capitalists.

Society

A more useful understanding of society, the status quo, is to view our behaviour as selfish. The undoubted success of capitalism, judged by its almost universal acceptance, depends in practice on self interest. Capitalists see this as vindication of choice. Like anarchists they cannot accept that our behaviour is a result of evolution and is largely inflexible. We do not choose to be mean. Biology tells us we did not evolve by being nice.

From the biological perspective society is simply a disparate collection of selfish individuals. They come together as a society because this offers a means to exploit one another. Those who are comfortably off do

LETTERS AND COMMENT

not accept this view because it exposes their interest in an exploitative society.

Exploitation means protection of jobs.

Those without jobs view society differently.

One can go further and say that our precious language, which is supposed to allow us to cooperate, is simply a means for deception and exploitation.

The sociobiologists, followers of Darwin, are not responsible for the dog eat dog view of our behaviour. The idea is not new. All that the sociobiologists have done is to throw a spanner in the explanation for our behaviour and the workings of society by finding evidence that we are not driven by social reasonableness but by genes. Some sociobiologists have become horrified by their own conclusion and have back tracked. These now say, 'We do not have to be way we are', which contradicts the principle. They attempt to justify intellect with reciprocated altruism. Fudging anarchists are keen to believe this. They have traded in The Workers for apologetic sociobiology which they hope will give them wriggle room for intellectual determinism.

I am all for the biological, deterministic, approach to our behaviour and think this is the way forward for anarchists. However, to make progress requires abandoning the touching belief in society and tackling the nasty reality of self interest. The challenge is for hard nosed anarchists and not for the happy bunny brigade.

Peter Gibson

Colin Ward and Anarchy

Colin Ward is one of the most important writers in the British anarchist movement. Throughout the decade of the 1960s he edited the monthly magazine *Anarchy* (running in tandem with *Freedom*, which was then weekly), extending anarchist ideas into new areas such as education, housing, planning, social work, play and many others. Anarchism as a practical philosophy rather than a (failed) revolutionary project. A selection of articles from *Anarchy* is available from Freedom Press (*A Decade of Anarchy*) and Freedom Press have just reprinted Colin's major work, *Anarchy in Action*.

Anarchy ran to 118 issues. It was noteworthy not just for its contents but for its covers, all designed by Rufus Segar. Freedom Press want to scan all the covers and put them up on the net, so that they can be downloaded for free. Unfortunately no one, not even Colin or Freedom Press has a full set. Does anyone have any early issues they could donate or lend to Freedom Press? It's issues 1 to 12 inclusive that are most needed. Please send details to momoseley@mac.com or send the actual issues to Freedom Press (FAO Mo Moseley), in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. If we can make up more than one set we'll try and sell the spare ones to raise some funds.

Mo Moseley

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Briana moved

American prisoner Briana Waters has been moved. Briana is serving a six year sentence for allegedly acting as a look-out during an ELF arson. There was no evidence to support the case against Briana other than the words of two police informants who lied to the police to try and get a lighter sentence.

- Briana's new address is: Briana Waters 36432-086, FCI Danbury, Federal Correctional Institution, Route 37 Danbury, CT 06811, USA

Kidnapping arrests

On 20th August four people got arrested in Greece, accused of kidnapping for ransom. Polikarpos Georgiadis, Vasilis Palaikostas, Vagelis Hrisohoides and one other were arrested, who the rest of the group have distanced themselves from because of his behaviour. On the 21st a further four people were arrested for playing a smaller role in the kidnapping. The person who was kidnapped some months ago was the president of the union for heavy industry owners (an employers' syndicate) Georgos Mylonas, who not long ago had made several controversial statements about working harder and longer in the factories. He was released after a sum of 10 million euros was paid, arranged by his wife. The media and police claim this money was meant for freeing Vasilis' brother from prison, Nikos Palaikostas. Pictures in the bourgeois press show the large variety of ammunition, Kalashnikovs, an RPG, explosive devices, bulletproof vests and fire brigade uniforms that were found at the arrest.

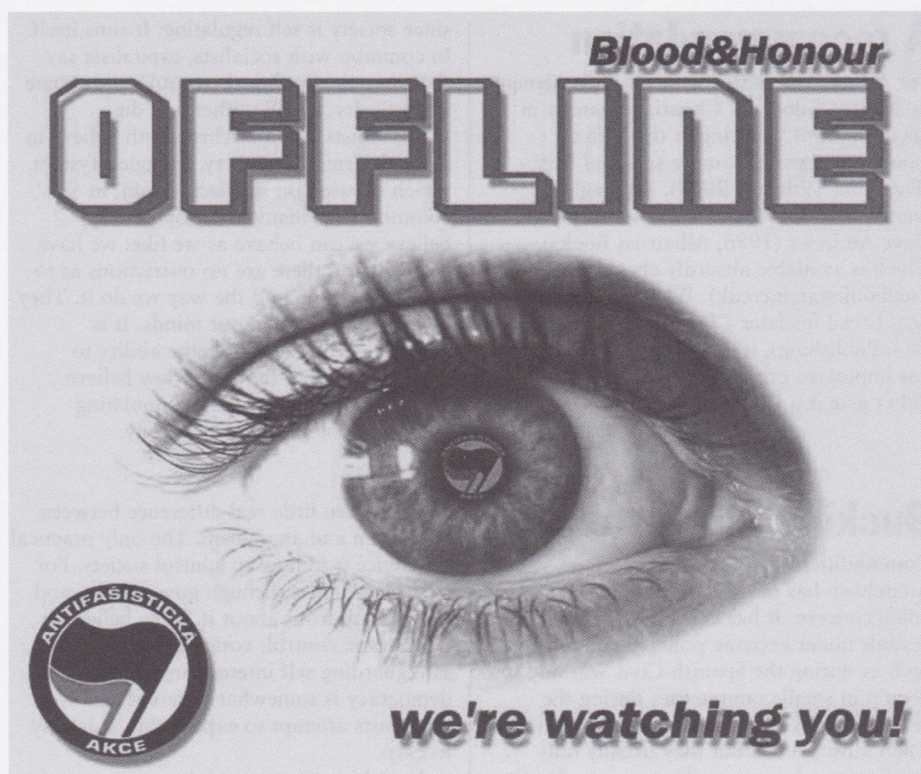
Immigration activists jailed

On 8th May 2008 Leninskiy district court sentenced six antifascists who took part in attacking a meeting organised by the movement against illegal immigration (DPNI) on Pionerskaya Square in St Petersburg in September 2006. The antifascists were accused of hooliganism (article 213, part 2 of Russian criminal code). The prosecutor demanded a six year prison sentence for the purported ringleader, and two of his comrades got a one year suspended sentence each. Two others accused got six month suspended sentences and the sixth was sentenced to six months of public works (also suspended).

The meeting on the 17th September 2006 was devoted to the events in Kondopoga in Karelia in which DPNI took an active part, escalating an ethnic conflict. After that a criminal case against DPNI leader A. Potkin (Belov) began – the authorities accused him of inciting national hatred. DPNI is one of the largest nationalist organisations in Russia and is known for its connections to criminal neonazi groups responsible for murders of foreigners and of antifascists.

The nazis wielded knives and a cleaver with the aim of disrupting the meeting – and that aim was reached.

Contact the antifascist information group at antifa_spb@riseup.net or phone +7 981 7452556



- Manchester Anarchist Federation, along with No Borders and Roma groups, have called a protest at the Italian Consulate in Manchester on 19th September.

They are campaigning against decrees by the Italian government which are threatening to restrict the movement and freedoms of Roma people, in a dramatic escalation of their ongoing anti-Roma policies.

In a statement, the organisers wrote: "All Roma people are being targeted as potential criminals and harsh laws condemning illegal immigrants to many years imprisonment are being used against Roma communities.

"Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian President under investigation for corruption, has put troops on the streets and used the newspapers and TV stations that he owns to stoke hatred and fear. Already, Roma people have been attacked and burned out of their homes as a result of this campaign of hate from the very top of the Italian government."

Protest at the Italian Consulate, Rodwell Tower, 111 Piccadilly, Manchester, at 11.30am on Friday 19th September 2008, contact: manchester@af-north.org

- German hackers have broken into the database of far-right website bloodandhonour.com and uploaded their entire database for general consumption (pictured above). The haul by the anti-fascists includes more than 30,000 pieces of data, covering nearly 32,000 ip addresses and 2,000 nazis.

Members of Daten-Antifa managed to break the access codes and copied roughly 800MB of data, including information that was only available to members.

The hackers wrote: "This site is very important for the world-wide neonazi-network including information about ten thousand users from all over the world. Their private messages and boards are now public and can be used for anti-fascist

actions. Naziscum fuck off! And do not forget: ZOG is watching you harharhar..." Download at madrid.indymedia.org/newswire/display/8597/index.php

- A Social Centres Network meeting was due to take place on Sunday 14th September. Among other items on the agenda were plans to work on providing a touring and campaigning trail through better links between the various social centres, bringing together support structures and a look at how social centres can be prepared for the economic downturn.

Email: socialcentrenetwork@lists.riseup.net

- One of the vilest neo-Nazi groups in the country is planning to hold a demonstration in Leeds. The so-called British Peoples Party (formerly the White Nationalist Party), whose leaders believe that all non-white people (along with Jews, Gypsies, Gays, and the Disabled) should be exterminated, plan to hold a demonstration against black Rap music outside HMV in Leeds city centre on Saturday 18th October.

The BPP are led by Leeds Nazi Kevin Watmough, who runs Redwatch, a site where fascists post details of their 'racial enemies' and instigate attacks on them. While pretending to be ill, Watmough makes a shabby living selling swastikas and other Nazi paraphernalia to his fellow fascists.

The organiser of the BPP demo is Watmough's girlfriend, Kate Dermody (or McDermody), a hardline Nazi who moved to Leeds from the Midlands, and has been trying to stir up racial conflict in the city ever since. Like Watmough, Dermody is a supporter of Adolf Hitler, and says she believes in 'Racial Holy War.' She runs her own blog, on which she openly jokes about the Holocaust see antifa.org.uk

Fritz Kater

A short biography of German trade unionist Fritz Kater, active in the Free Association of German Trade Unions (FVdG) and its successor organisation, the Free Workers' Union of Germany.

Fritz Kater (1861–1945) was born in Barleben, Germany, the son of a farm labourer. Kater's mother died when he was two years old, leaving him to be brought up by his mother-in-law. From the age of five he worked on the farm or at home to support his family, and during his final two years in school he also worked in a local sugar factory during the winter. Around this time he began an apprenticeship as a mason, but still had to help his elderly father on the farm. This had its benefits however, as it meant that his father was able to plead successfully for the young Fritz's exemption from military service.

In 1883, a time when the Anti-Socialist Laws forbade most union activities, Kater joined the masons' trade union in Magdeburg. Here he came into contact with socialists from Berlin and Hamburg, and under their influence soon became a socialist himself. He spent much of his spare time reading illegal socialist literature, and became active in the union's clandestine activities.

In 1887 Kater joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), and that same year he founded a masons' union in Barleben, becoming the organisation's first chairman. His unionist activities, which included attempting to organise workers from the sugar factory he had worked in during his youth, earned the resentment of the local authorities, and in 1889 Kater was sentenced to a two-month prison term for holding an illegal meeting. During the following year he served further jail-time for giving a speech held to be seditious.

After the demise of the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1890, Kater developed close contacts with the Berliner Jungen (The Berlin Youth), an organisation of radical students, heavily influenced by anarchist ideas, established in opposition to the authoritarianism and increasingly Marxist orientation of the SPD. Though he never officially joined the Jungen, Kater personally knew some of its leading Berlin members including Bruno Wille, Carl Wildberger and Max Baginski.

In 1890, soon after the end of the Anti-Socialist Laws, Kater co-founded the social democratic newspaper *Magdeburger Volksstimme*. The paper's editors included



several members of the Jungen – notably Hans Mueller, Fritz Koester and Paul Kampffmeyer. These characters argued their case well, causing the SPD leadership to remove them from their positions. At the 1891 SPD congress Kater voted against the motion to expel the Jungen from the party, but he nevertheless remained in the SPD rather than joining the new organisation formed by the Jungen, the Union of Independent Socialists, which counted the likes of Max Baginski, Wilhelm Werner, Rudolf Rocker and Gustav Landauer among its participants.

In 1892, Kater moved to Berlin, where he was elected a delegate for the city masons' union. During the debates over the organisational structure of the union he supported the 'localist' concept, as well as the creation of the Representatives Centralisation of Germany in 1897, which, in 1903, renamed itself the FVdG.

Kater left the SPD in 1907, after refusing a staff job with the centralised trade unions and declining to run as a delegate to the Reichstag delegate. Though initially critical of anarchism and syndicalism, he soon became a leading anarcho-syndicalist figure in Germany. In 1907 he attended the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam, and during a speech at the FVdG congress the following year he openly aligned himself with syndicalism for the first time. In 1913, he was a delegate at the First International Syndicalist Congress at Holborn Town Hall, London.

It was a spell in prison alongside Rudolf Rocker in 1920 that finally led him to a complete break with social democracy. Kater was a key figure in the production of the FVdG paper *Einigkeit*, which was instrumental

in sustaining the FVdG's structures during the First World War. The FVdG, the Anarchist Federation of Germany and several small pacifist groups were the only opponents of the war, the FVdG opposing it on the grounds of proletarian internationalism. For this they suffered severe persecution from the state, while the loyal SPD and its unions were allowed to carry on as before.

Kater was pivotal in maintaining the illegal network of the FVdG, and until 1917 he produced news-sheets *Mitteilungsblatt* and then *Rundschriften*. It was thanks to these structures that the FVdG was able to re-assemble so quickly after the war, to have its first national meeting at Berlin in December 1918, and to produce a new paper, *Der Syndikalist*.

After the war, Kater was one of the founders of the Free Workers' Union of Germany (FAUD). He worked for the FAUD as a speaker and author, representing the union at various congresses of the International Workers Association during which he became a popular speaker. He gave much assistance to the many Russian anarchists in exile in Berlin, and gave his publishing house, Fritz Kater Verlag, to the FAUD. It subsequently published more than a hundred libertarian texts.

In 1930, at the age of 70, Kater resigned as chairman of the FAUD to make the position available to younger members. He continued to work for the movement until the Nazi takeover of Germany smothered all opposition. Kater died in hospital on 20th May 1945, from injuries sustained when an incendiary bomb he had found (and attempted to diffuse) while working in his garden exploded.

Nick Heath (edited by James Horrox)

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

SEPTEMBER

13th Bristol Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 5pm at St Werburghs Centre, Horley Road, Bristol BS2 9TJ, see bristolanarchistbookfair.org

14th Benefit gig for Class War and No Sweat – 'No Sweat on a Sunday' runs from 2pm until late at the 12 Bar, 179 Westcott Place, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 5HT, artists include Headjam, The Parodies, 2 Sick Monkeys, Robb Johnson & the Irregulars and Tommy Munroe, also a BBQ, raffle and stalls, more info from nosweat.org.uk or londonclasswar.org

19th Film showing of *The Working Class Goes to Heaven*, directed by Elio Petri, at 7pm, The Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton Street, Walworth, London SE17

26th Guerrilla Gardening benefit kicks off at 7.30pm at The Rooms, 33–35 Western Road, St Leonards, East Sussex, TN37 6DJ, featuring Robb Johnson and others, see robbjohnson.co.uk or guerrillagardening.org for more

28th Walking tour of the gentrification of Dalston and Hackney Central, culminating with a picnic in London Fields, meet at 1pm at the Dalston Peace Mural on Dalston Lane just after the corner with Kingsland Road near Dalston Kingsland station, for more contact 07932 241737 or londoncoalitionagainstopoverty@gmail.com

OCTOBER

4th Keep Space for peace, protest at Menwith Hill US base near Harrogate, North Yorkshire, from 12 noon to around 5pm, see caab.org.uk and space4peace.org for details

15th Smash EDO mass demo against the arms trade, meet opposite Falmer station (next to the Sussex University sign), Brighton, at 12 noon, see smashedo.org.uk/shut-itt.htm for details

16th Amnesty International book sale from 11am until 6pm in the Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see conwayhall.org.uk for details

18th London Anarchist Bookfair from 10am to 7pm at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4ND

NOVEMBER

1st Peasants Revolt 2008, a peaceful protest representing communities and individuals suffering under an unsustainable system, march to Hyde Park in London for solidarity rally, see peasantsrevolt.org for more details.

1st Labour Movement Conference on class, climate change and clean coal, the climate campers and the unions, to be held at The Upstairs Lounge, The Bridge Hotel, Castle Garth, Newcastle Upon Tyne from 11.30am until 5.30pm with speakers including David Douglass, Rachel Whittaker, Arthur Scargill, Paul Chatterton, Bob Crow and many more, and afterwards there will be a social from 7.30pm with live bands.

BOOKS

Boudica

by Manda Scott

Bantam, £6.99 each volume

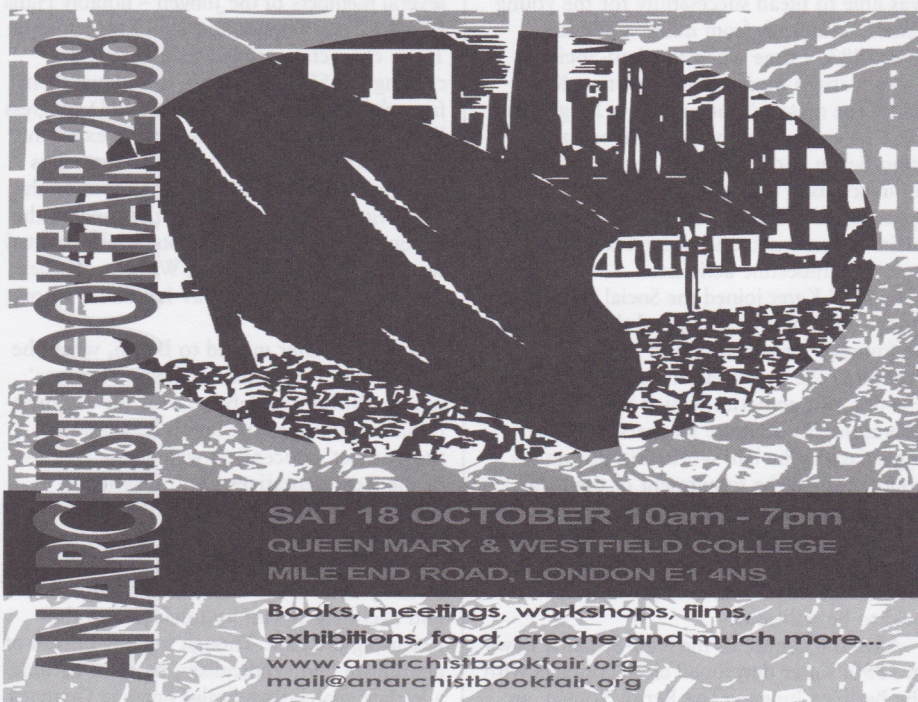
All four volumes of Manda Scott's fictionalised account of Boudica are now available in paperback (*Dreaming the Eagle*, *Dreaming the Bull*, *Dreaming the Hound* and *Dreaming the Serpent Spear*). Very little is known about the real Boudica, the warrior queen who led a rebellion against the Roman occupation of Britain in the first century. After initial success, destroying a Roman legion, Boudica and her forces were defeated and Britain returned to the horrors of the Roman Empire, looting, torture, rape, murder, slavery and so on. The catalyst for the rebellion may have been Boudica's daughters being gang-raped by Roman soldiers but nothing is known for sure.

Against this sparse historical background Scott has written a massive work of fiction which depicts the ancient Britons much like some tribes in the Americas before European invasion destroyed their cultures. Expert warriors, horse-riders (and breeders), skilled in handicrafts and the medicinal use of herbs, entering trance-like states to get in touch with their gods and ancestors (but without the hallucinogenic use of traditional medicines such as peyote). The ancient Britons have

hereditary leaders, such as Boudica herself, but are still relatively egalitarian. Everyone works to bring the harvest in and Boudica herself is a blacksmith, forging weapons and horseshoes. Scott then enters the realms of fantasy, suggesting that women were warriors, just as the men were, fighting on equal terms. In reality women cannot fight men on equal terms because of men's greater size and strength. To beat a man in a fight a woman must be more skilful or use a weapon the man doesn't have. But you appreciate where Scott is coming from. The world would be a lot safer place for women if they could fight men on equal terms.

Scott's imagination has created a fictional world of great power and believability. The series became an unexpected best-seller, (which is why the publishers originally brought the second, third and fourth volumes out in hardback). There are obviously a lot of people out there who are interested in things like the resistance of the ancient Britons to the evil of the Roman Empire. I wonder how many of Scott's readers are also interested in resistance to today's evil empire, the American one headed by Emperor Bush, with its attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan and anywhere else that gets in its way.

Mo Moseley



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QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Anarchist and former Chartist James Harrigan. He regretted it because he despised the political charlatans who misled the workers.
2. Richard Nixon. He referred to the anti-war movement as a "wild orgasm of anarchists sweeping across the country like a prairie fire."
3. Czech and Slovak Republics, because they

- inherited the Beneš decrees, which confiscated German-owned property after World War Two. The Prince of Liechtenstein lost lots of land in Czechoslovakia, as he had profited from nazism.
4. It was the code name for the US rescue of German military scientists in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The frustration of Richard Dawkins

Richard Dawkins, Britain's leading evolutionary theorists, has been presenting an extremely interesting and informative series on Darwinism (*The Genius of Charles Darwin*, Channel 4). It is a three part series to commemorate the 150th anniversary of discovery of natural selection (next year marks the same anniversary of the publication of *On Origin of Species*).

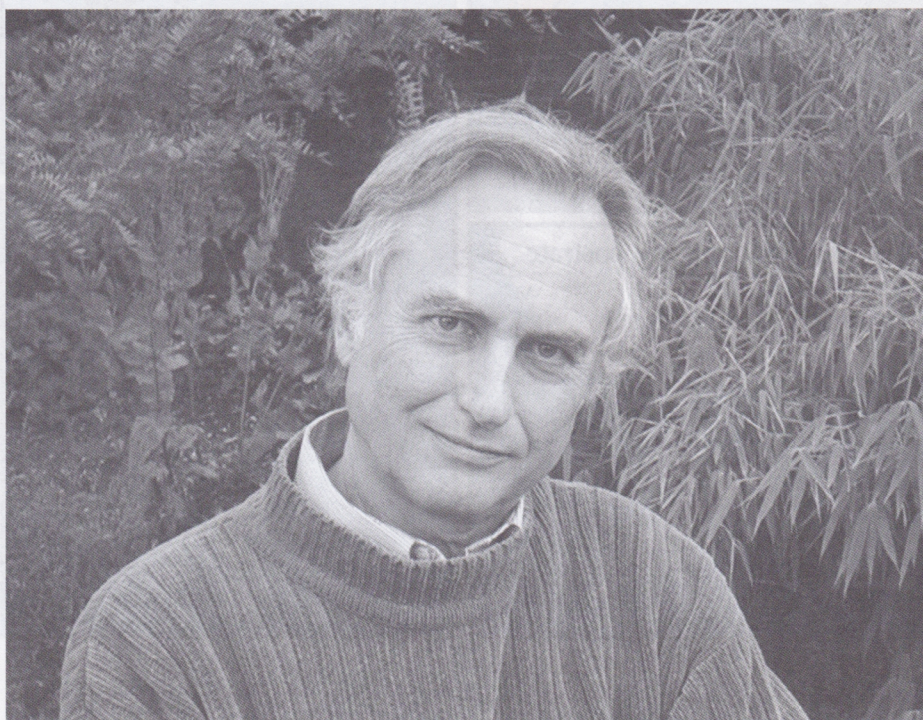
The first part was informative, although Dawkins did simply state, in passing, how Darwin was influenced in developing his ideas by economics, namely Malthus's infamous essay on population. No mention of how that essay, refuted in practice since it was written, became popular in ruling class circles to counter attempts at social reform (it was directly aimed at William Godwin). Given that Dawkins goes out of his way in the second part to attack Social Darwinism, this oversight was strange.

And it is this second part of the series which is so frustrating. In it Dawkins tries to present the 'dark' side of natural selection but also to show how morality could have evolved. Yet, his account is full of strange exclusions and underdeveloped ideas and concepts.

He starts by proclaiming that while, "as a scientist I'm thrilled by natural selection, but as a human being I abhor it as a principle for organising society." This is understandable, as natural selection has been used by the right to justify everything from *laissez faire* capitalism to Nazism. Dawkins is at pains to say that he is against attempts to use Darwin's ideas to justify such ideas and policies. Yet, the rationale for this can be seen from the very one-sided manner that natural selection is portrayed. If the animal world is 'dog eat dog' and people are animals then the conclusion seems to logically follow that organising human society in non-competitive ways is against 'our' nature. Dawkins turns to the capitalist economy, examining whether there are parallels to be drawn between economic and biological systems. He, rightly, notes that it is something of a stretch to apply evolutionary ideas to capitalist economics and best not to.

Sadly, he does not discuss the obvious impact of capitalist economic theory, and the *laissez faire* economy of his day, on Darwin's ideas and how they were interpreted. Darwin's ideas were not produced in an ivory tower, unaffected by the society and dominant ideology of his times. Russian critics of Darwin made precisely this point, acknowledging the importance of natural selection but noting that Darwin and his followers downplayed the importance of co-operation in nature due to cultural influences. Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* came out of this critical acceptance of Darwin's work in Russian scientific circles (see 'The Scientific Background of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*' by Daniel P. Todes in *The Raven*, Vol. 6, No. 4).

Nor does he point out the obvious contradiction. Natural selection is about individuals



yet modern industry is based on joint activity. Rockefeller, one of the Social Darwinists Dawkins mentioned, did not rise to his position by his own efforts but as a result of exploiting the work of others. His position is, surely, based on the self-sacrifice of others to enrich him? Similarly, unions are unmentioned in Dawkins account – unlike Kropotkin, who pointed to them as examples of co-operative behaviour in the hostile environment of capitalism.

But that is part of a wider blindness to class and its impact on science. This can be seen when scientists proclaim themselves above cultural influences while, at the same time, explaining nature in terms of the assumptions and practice of capitalism. It can be seen when Dawkins suggested that 'poor laws' were an example of us rebelling against our selfish genes. The welfare state would, perhaps, be a better example given how the poor laws were an instrument of ruling class repression (the Tudor Poor Laws, for example, were harsh towards the able bodied poor who were not looking for work – whippings and beatings were acceptable punishments). The workhouse does not suggest altruism. That Malthus wanted the poor laws abolished did not make them a product of altruism but rather a sign that their costs now outweighed their benefits and so had become a burden to the capitalist class.

The conclusion cannot be avoided that underlying Dawkins account is a perspective influenced, probably unknowingly, by the system he lives in and so he sees ruthless competition between individuals ('nature red in tooth and claw') as being the core of natural selection. Yet, as Kropotkin stressed,

co-operative behaviour is a product of natural selection. By co-operating, individuals of a species gain a benefit and survive to reproduce and, moreover, such mutual aid lays the foundations for altruism. Thus natural selection does not preclude co-operation, altruism and ethics. Yet to 'abhor' it with regards to humanity as Dawkins does implies that such behaviour is not a product of natural selection and is, somehow, unnatural.

In this Dawkins (Darwin's Rottweiler) is similar to Thomas Huxley (Darwin's Bulldog). In the essay which provoked Kropotkin to write the articles which would become *Mutual Aid*, Huxley argued that we could, and should, organise society against the laws of nature. Which, in itself raises an interesting paradox – how can we act in ways against our nature? Can lions become vegetarian? That is the issue Kropotkin addressed and which he proved, beyond reasonable doubt, that co-operative behaviour is common-place in the natural world precisely because it ensures survival and so civilisation was not against nature as Huxley asserted.

Dawkins does discuss this, noting that selfish genes produce altruistic individuals, but this aspect of his ideas does not seem fully integrated with his other views. This can be seen from his repeated comments that he has been struggling with the issues of selfishness and altruism, competition and co-operation, for some time. Halfway through the programme, he states that he considered morality as having evolved but at the end, as with his book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins



Review

◀ page 15

proclaims that our big brains ensure that, unique amongst animals, we can rebel against our selfish genes and organise society as we would like it to be.

Yet, ultimately, there is no paradox. Co-operation and displays of sympathy, sensitivity, altruism and, in humans, ethics can be reconciled with the idea of the survival of the fittest. Those who co-operate, as Kropotkin stressed, are the fittest and so survive. This produces group living and, consequently, the basis for sympathy and, ultimately, altruism. Ethical behaviour is just as much part of our nature as competition and ruthlessness – more so, as it is unlikely that we could have survived and prospered

if the latter rather than the former predominated.

That is why Dawkins programme was so frustrating. On the one hand, he is aware of how co-operation is natural and a product of natural selection. On the other, he tends to paint a picture of nature as one of individual competition and implies that most of humanity's altruistic behaviour is against natural selection (a product of our 'misfiring selfish genes' as he put it). If he had questioned some of the cultural assumptions he seems to take for granted then the programme would have been improved but, ultimately, Dawkins is a left-wing liberal, even a social democrat, and not an anarchist so that this was not done is hardly surprising.

Iain McKay

THE QUIZ

1. Who claimed to have converted Ben Tillett to socialism, and how did he subsequently feel about it after he became a nineteenth century dockers union leader?
2. Who used "wild orgasm" as a collective nouns for anarchists?
3. Which European countries are not diplomatically recognised by Liechtenstein and why?
4. What was Operation Paperclip?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard is available from Freedom Press, £5 (post free).

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anarchism in Scotland



photo: ianmac3

ANTI WAR: Anarchists get involved in an anti-war demo in May of this year.

of Glasgow. The Edinburgh branch is undertaking a lot of Migrant worker solidarity and outreach, particularly amongst the Polish community. This is bringing in a lot of people and is very exciting. There's also a Scottish IWW Education Workers organising committee which is taking off at the moment.

It's hard to say how 'prominent' anarchist ideas are in the IWW up here. The union doesn't promote partisan politics, so there are plenty of socialists and people who don't have a label in the union. Certainly, much of the left sees the IWW as a little anarchist-only union. Maybe it's the red and black union flags ... it's not true!

Do other anarchist federations have much of a presence?

Declan: Well, there's a small Solidarity Federation (anarcho-syndicalist) presence in Edinburgh and some members of Liberty and Solidarity (the new platformist group). The Anarchist Federation has new groups in Glasgow and Stirling and individual members in most parts. The AF has had a presence in Scotland since the early 1990s and in the early 2000s we had a Glasgow group which produced a bulletin called *Ar-a-mach* (Scottish Gaelic for Uprising). We are planning an Educational Dayschool and a new bulletin. At the moment we are meeting nationally, distributing *Resistance* and AF literature and are involved in the IWW, Glasgow Anarchists, Praxis and the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh.

Nick: There hasn't been historically a unified organisation, mostly things have been organised around loose affinity groups and campaigns. It's positive that there's been some growth from the AF but we're still very marginal and sidelined by the larger social democrat groups. The official launch for Praxis (a platformist group) is in the middle of September, which is based in Glasgow and Edinburgh with about a dozen members, and we're planning to recruit heavily. We're close to Liberty and Solidarity in England with individuals being very involved, but decided to remain separate.

How about community politics etc...is there much support for Platformism?

Declan: We think involvement in community campaigns can bring results that show that direct action gets the goods and that politics aren't something separate from people's everyday lives. AF members from Praxis have been particularly involved in this.

Is there more support for Platformism in Scotland than England? I think class struggle based anarchism is certainly strong up here. Historically, the anarchist movements in places like Fife and Glasgow were working class movements, not sub-cultural. I think anarchists up here are generally pro-organisation, they see the need for consistent activity. The AF attempts to offer a theoretical and organisational framework and general continuity to activity and has attracted people already active in Scottish libertarian politics.

There's a lot of activity up here in the area of asylum seeker and migrant worker solidarity, the direct action anti-militarists and the Edinburgh Chiapas Solidarity work has been a long-term campaign with a high profile. The Glasgow Anarchists are bringing anarchist politics into the streets, making anarchist ideas available. If the anarchist movement wants to be accessible, it needs to be visible – I think that's a basic!

I think these are times of great potential in Scotland, for libertarian politics, for anarchist organisation and working class self-organisation. But, we've a long way to go.

Nick: For the first time there seems to be a hegemony of class struggle anarchist ideas within Scottish anarchism. But some of the stuff which is being done is useful class building stuff and some of it is still pretty incidental. The anarchist movement is marginal, we have a lot to do.

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